

A Network of Assurance and Security: The Evolving Role of Clans in Somali Society

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Introduction

Somalia is a nation of a little over eight million people that sits strategically on the Horn of Africa, at the entrance to the Red Sea. Somalia's climate is arid, with limited rainfall and has little fertile land for agriculture. Due to the climatic conditions, Somalis are a nomadic people, mainly focusing on herding as a means of livelihood, especially before the industrialization of the country. In response to the specific difficulties that this nomadic lifestyle produced, Somalis stratified themselves in clans. The purpose of these social arrangements is to manage and appropriate the small amount of resources and provide aid or assistance to clan members when necessary. Although there are six major clans, and literally hundreds of sub clans, Somalia holds the rare distinction as being one of the few countries in Africa that has a basically homogenous population, as almost all of the inhabitants of the country are ethnically Somali and over 99% of Somalis are Muslim. However the homogenous nature of the country has not prevented strife; in fact, Somalia has experienced only nine years of democracy since independence in 1960 and has been in a state of continuous civil war since 1991.

The civil war in Somalia, which is still unresolved, arose out of the power vacuum resulting from the overthrow of the Somali dictator Siad Barre in 1991. Barre ruled Somalia from 1969 to 1991 and is responsible for a great deal of Somalia's problems today. Although a tenuously unified movement effectively deposed Barre, none of the clan based opposition groups planned for what would happen after Barre's defeat. Furthermore, the policies of tribalism, and Barre's creation of clan rivalries and use of clan based violence, created a situation in which the various clans were all competing for power, with no desire or arena for negotiation and peaceful transition. This competition

was further fueled by the large amount of cold war era weapons available in Somalia, a result of Barre's mismanagement and the willingness of the USSR and the USA to provide Somalis with weaponry.

One of the main impediments to ending the civil war in Somalia today is the inability of the various clans to compromise and end their violent conflict. These clans are by no means a new development in Somalia, as they have existed since people first began to settle in Somalia. Their traditional purpose was to act as an extended network of kinship, which served to assist members of the clan and deal with community problems. Starting in the colonial period and extending to the end of Siad Barre's regime in 1991, clans transformed into armed militias bent on achieving power and eliminating other rival clans. This new incarnation of clans has been the driving force behind Somalia's fifteen year long civil war and is responsible for the displacement of over one million Somalis from their homes. With an influx of displaced Somalis settled in other parts of the world, an interesting trend has emerged regarding the refugees' clan allegiance and the role and importance of clans within Somali populations outside of Somalia.

One of the main destinations for these refugees has been the United States. Within the United States, Columbus Ohio has become a popular destination and today it is home to the second largest Somali population in the United States. One of the most interesting characteristics of the refugees is the fact that they do not display the extreme clan rivalries present in Somalia, but instead serve as a universal model of unity and willingness to help other Somalis. The existence of such a complete contradiction between the roles of clans in Somalia as opposed to in the Somali Diaspora raises

questions about the true nature of Somali clans and what caused their unfortunate development. The evolution of Somali clan structure from a traditional model of kinship to the power hungry gangs that exist today was fueled by misguided European policies, Cold War politics, and the poor governance and tribalism of Siad Barre. However, when freed from the confines of perpetual civil war, the traditional model of the clan returns to Somali refugees, demonstrating the fluidity of the concept of clan and a hope that Somalis can unify their country and end the civil war. As a result, this study seeks to explore the changing function of clans in Somali society and provides an examination of clan affiliation and identity in Columbus, Ohio.

Clans in Somali Society to 1969

Clans have always been an integral part of Somali society. Muhammad Farah Aidid, the de-facto leader of Somalia from 1991 to 1993, writes: “the very fact that this social structure has been continuing for thousands of years without much change despite colonial rule and an oppressive military regime under Siad Barre shows its strength, utility, and capability to solve the various problems and exigencies of their difficult life.”¹ Since the first people started settling in Somalia before the tenth century, clans have provided a social structure to facilitate survival and access to resources in Somalia’s harsh environment. There are six main tribes or clans in Somalia: the Dir, the Isaq, the Hawiye, the Darod the Digil and the Rahanweyn. There are a number of smaller clans, and also an uncountable number of sub clans. These clans have elaborate genealogies that can be traced through generations, showing the origins of the sub clans, and serving as a means of locating specific members in the Somali social structure. I.M. Lewis, the

¹ Mohammed Farah Aidid and Dr. Satya Pal Ruhela, Somalia: From the Dawn of Civilization to the Modern Times (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1994),): 181.

premier scholar on Somalia, writes “what a person’s address is in England, his genealogy is in Somalia.”² This genealogy can be further broken down into Somali groups called *reers*, which can number anywhere from the hundreds to the thousands. These *reers* are comprised of a number of families which are closely related to each other, usually descended from a common ancestor, and are responsible for fulfilling obligations arising from blood feuds or conflicts. Each *reer* has a *xeer*, similar to a treaty or contract, and “it is constantly revised in view of the changing circumstances like the conditions relating to the fragmentation of groups which have become too large or unwieldy to continue as manageable units, fissions arising out of mutual quarrels, rivalry for political control among leading elders or differences.”³ These *xeers* serve to bond clans, sub clans, or *reers* together on certain issues, but can also create conflict as *xeers* can pit groups against one another.⁴ Another key element in clan relations is the concept of the *diya*-paying group. According to Somalia traditional law *xeer*, if a man is killed, blood compensation dictates a payment of a hundred camels. The *diya*-paying group of the victim would collectively claim the damages from the killer’s group. This practice allows for effective redress and sanction for conflicts between groups in a pastoral society.⁵

Clan conflict in pre-colonized Somalia was ever-present; however, it was also controlled and isolated. I.M. Lewis writes that clans were “driven by the poverty of their resources to intense competition for access to water and grazing”, both extremely

² *Ibid.*, Aidid and Ruhela, 165.

³ *Ibid.*, Aidid and Ruhela, 173.

⁴ Mohamed Diriye Abdullahi, *Culture and Customs of Somalia* (London: Greenwood Press, 2001),): 139.

⁵ Harvey Glickman, ed, *Ethnic Conflict and Democratization in Africa* (Atlanta: The African Studies Association Press, 1995),): 225.

important in a desert area where resources are limited⁶. Clan conflict also frequently arose over blood feuds that *xeers* were required to uphold. However because the clans were decentralized, and scattered throughout the country, mass clan conflict did not exist and conflicts were not internalized. In fact, depending on the *xeer*, a clan that once was an enemy could easily in the future become a friend. This fluidity is explained in the Somali proverb “to protect yourself from your son, rely on your brother; for protection from your brother, rely on your son.”⁷ Examples of the traditional actions of clans can include the community donating animals to a family whose livestock had died in a draught; or the community can stand as one and take action if rustlers came and took a member’s camels. In a more urban setting, an indigent person can be assured of a place to stay and food to eat if they find another member of their clan. Thus, one’s clan serves as a safety net throughout life in case of need, regardless of the circumstances.

Somalia avoided European expansion until the 1880s when the Italians used the Berlin Conference to attain colonies to help their struggling economy and the British expanded further south from pre-existing outposts. The British and Italian territories would eventually fuse and become Somalia as it exists today. The clans played only a minor role during the colonial era; however the European powers did occasionally pit clans against each other. For instance, when Sayyid Muhammad rebelled against the British and created what some called the first Somali nationalist movement; the British armed various clans and instigated rivalry and strife, leading to clan conflict and minimizing the impact of Muhammad’s movement.⁸ One of the main reasons that clan

⁶ I.M. Lewis, A Modern History of the Somali, 4th ed. (Oxford: James Currey Ltd, 2002),: 11.

⁷ Glickman, 199.

⁸ Lewis, 76.

conflict remained isolated is the clans decentralized structure. Because they were not included in the colonial governments, clans in the south had little knowledge, contact, or interest in the activities of clans in the north and vice-versa. Furthermore, since so many Somalis were nomads in the vast interior, they avoided many European social controls which were more endemic and pervasive in the coastal regions and urban centers. Thus, even when instigated by colonial powers, clan conflicts could only escalate to a certain point before Somalis lost interest or naturally solved the conflicts, similar to clan feuds before European arrival.

After the global reconfiguring of the post World War II period, northern and southern Somaliland became a United Nations Trust Territory, which was in theory a transitional stage to prepare the indigenous peoples' for independence and majority rule. As with many African nations trying to find a nationalistic identity after the conclusion of World War II, Somalis founded the Somali Youth League (SYL) in 1945, which would serve as the main opposition party to colonial occupation. Although characterized by internal difficulties in organizing and clan cooperation, the Youth League managed to maintain itself as a viable, united force and protested against the British administration in the north and the Italian administration in the south.

In 1960, British Somaliland and Italian Somaliland technically merged to form an independent Somalia. The SYL was extremely important in the initial transition period and, in the first elections of 1961, won an overwhelming majority in the newly created National Assembly. Coinciding with the seemingly democratic situation, the president, prime minister, and cabinet represented a carefully balanced group from different clans and different parts of the country. As the following information shows, all of the six

major clans were continuous and proportionately represented in the government during the years of 1960, 1966, 1967 and 1969: Darod- (6,6,6,6); Hawiye- (4,3,4,5); Digil and Rahanweyn- (2,3,3,2); Dir- (0,1,1,0); and Isaq- (2,3,4,5).⁹ This example of clan cooperation demonstrates that when given the opportunity, clans worked together for the benefit of the entire nation of Somalia. It also shows a plateau of clan based politics in lieu of attempted national government.

However, as the 1960s progressed, Somalis had an increasingly difficult time keeping clan lineages and clan based parties out of the political sphere. Whereas in the 1964 election there was still a nationalistic spirit of clan compromise, the 1969 elections represent a much more clan influenced event. There were over 1000 candidates and 63 different parties represented contesting 123 seats, demonstrating that the allure of power was enough to splinter the fragile sense of Somali nationalism. Mismanagement of finances was rampant as many candidates spent huge portions of the budget to run their campaigns; some candidates spent as much as 30,000 dollars when the nation's budget was around thirty million.¹⁰ However the outcome of the anarchic election ceased to be relevant when, on October 21, 1969, Chief of the Armed Forces Mohamed Siad Barre staged a bloodless coup and seized power.

Somalia's short lived democratic period was a very influential one. In many ways, the inability of Somalis to unify their country illustrates the problems that the British and Italians left behind. In a more general sense, it highlighted issues concerning cooperation and access to power that would re-emerge at the conclusion of Barre's reign

⁹ Ibid, Lewis, 221.

¹⁰ Ahmed I. Samatar, Socialist Somalia: Rhetoric & Reality (London: Institute for African Alternatives Zed Books Ltd., 1988),): 71.

and have plagued Somalia for years. First, newly independent Somalia faced many problems that it inherited from the Europeans. Forced centralization became one of the main barriers to clan unity. In pre-colonial Somalia clans interacted and co-existed, but did not have to join together and make political decisions for the benefit of the whole country.

Democracy as a concept was no stranger to the Somalis, for the traditional method of governance was based on allowing committees *guddi* or selected representatives *guurti* to debate until a decision that all agreed on could be reached. Although based on the same principles, Somali democracy, the “customary process of decision making [which] is democratic almost to the point of anarchy,” and Western style democratic republics are not the same.¹¹ The European system focused on choosing a few people to represent the whole country, while the traditional Somali system is much more oriented for smaller communities. By forcing the clans to unify, especially in a Western style government foreign to them, and providing them with no training or a practice period, Europeans essentially set up the Somalis for failure.

The union of the British controlled Northern Somaliland and the Italian controlled Southern Somaliland also provided infant Somalia with some major issues concerning unification. Differences between the north and south of Somalia included: currencies, administrative languages, legal traditions and systems, style of government, cultural priorities and others. Since the Somali people had no formal written language until 1971, many of these differences were especially disorienting.¹² In addition to forcing Somalis into a foreign government structure that totally undermined their traditional system of

¹¹ Abdullahi, 140.

¹² Lewis, 170-171.

governance, the Europeans did not allow any Somalis to actively participate during the colonial period and thus poor leadership was a large problem for the Somalis. Initially the SYL did a remarkable job in terms of uniting Somalis under a nationalistic banner. However once those in the government understood the power that they wielded, especially when it came to allocating resources, many of the nationalistic principles were abandoned in favor of tribalism. Tribalism is the process of using one's ethnic affiliation to determine access to rights, privileges and resources. One method in which early Somali politicians used tribalism was concerning the allocation of government funds. For instance, the Somali National Treasury was relieved of around eight million US dollars by those in leadership positions and used to help certain SYL candidates in close election races.¹³ When Siad Barre took power in 1969, many believed that he could bring an end to some of Somalia's early problems; however, Barre's reigns did nothing but exacerbates the pre-existing issues and create new, more destructive ones.

Clans and Political Conflict under Siad Barre's Rule 1969-1991

The regime of Siad Barre can be divided into two phases. From 1969-1978, Barre promoted Somali nationalism and with assistance from the Soviet Union attempted to improve Somalia's social, economic and military conditions. However, after defeat in the Ogaden War, Barre's policies from 1979-1991 changed substantially into that of a paranoid despot, who used foreign aid from the United States to further suppress his opposition. Siad Barre was born in 1919 in the city of Ganane in Italian Somaliland, and was a member of the Marehan clan. Barre, who had no formal education, started his career as a policeman in Italian Somaliland, and then ascended through the ranks of the

¹³ Samatar, 115.

military. In 1965, he became Chief of Staff for Somali Army. The fact that his 1969 coup was relatively bloodless demonstrates the ineffectiveness of the previous regime and the fact that, initially, Barre enjoyed popular support. In support of his coup, in a 1971 London Times interview, he stated “injustice and maladministration, lack of social progress and economic development, coupled with a sinking national morale, compelled us to bring about a change.”¹⁴ Barre’s first major “improvements” were to abolish the National Assembly, suspend the constitution, and ban political parties, which he said had thus far only been used to further the goals of individual clans. Barre stated that the goals of his regime were to “end tribalism, nepotism, corruption, and misrule.”¹⁵ Furthermore, Somali unification and any other national liberation movements were to be supported. Barre also established the Supreme Revolutionary Council (SRC) which was the single party in Somalia.

The 1960s were a pivotal period for the entirety of Africa. Known as the period of decolonization, over thirty countries achieved independence from European powers Great Britain, Portugal, France, and Belgium during this decade. The newly independent states all had to deal with a variety of issues, one of which was how to embrace their incorporation into the international community. Because of the emphasis placed on global cold war politics almost instantly upon their independence, these nations faced the pivotal decision whether to ally with the United States or the USSR. Both countries avidly courted third world nations as strategic allies, and also as buffers and spaces for military bases. Perhaps because of their former oppressors’ connection to the free market

¹⁴ Jama Mohamed Ghalib, The Cost of Dictatorship: The Somali Experience (New York: Lilian Barber Press Inc., 1995),): 119-121.

¹⁵ Lewis, 209.

economies of the West, or perhaps because of cultural similarities to communist ideology, many African countries chose to adopt communism shortly after independence. Some examples of the many nations that attempted communist programs or governments include Ghana, Tanzania, Guinea, Senegal, and Somalia.

In 1970, to celebrate the first anniversary of the successful coup, Siad Barre and the SRC announced that Somalia would dedicate itself to a policy known as Scientific Socialism. The literal translation in Somali means “wealth-sharing based on wisdom,” and it emphasized the concepts of unity, self-reliance and self help.¹⁶ Some historians feel the decision to embrace the Soviet bloc’s ideology was a result of a rejection of the previous government’s Western leanings and the nation’s growing dependence on Russian aid and arms shipments, which had first started in the mid 1960s. Another sensible conclusion would be Somalia’s hesitance to ally with the United States because of their support of Haile Selassie’s government in Ethiopia, who were historic enemies of Somalia. In addition to receiving aid, much of it military, from the USSR, Somalia adopted various socialist initiatives and programs. However, it is important to understand that Somalia’s transition to socialism did not always manifest itself to a majority of the populous. The rural nomadic herdsman, who still made up a large percentage of the country’s population, were often not immediately affected by the government’s policies; in some cases they were not affected at all. Furthermore, although the SRC did in actuality institute many socialist policies, it always was more dependent on the USSR’s financial contributions than its ideological ones.

¹⁶ Ibid. Lewis, 209.

One of the most significant changes that occurred during Scientific Socialism was the manner in which clans were able to operate. Scientific Socialism represented a transition to a vehement condemnation of tribalism; the official slogan of tribalism became “tribalism divides [where] socialism unites.” The “Campaign Against Tribalism” began in 1971; dubbed *Olol*, it was a nationwide attempt to battle corruption and resuscitate Pan-Somalism and national unity.¹⁷ Although the government’s attempt to consolidate unity and downplay factionalism in its early stages is understandable, many of its policies were stifling to traditional clan activities and the punishments many times unreasonable.

The SRC’s policy towards tribalism ranged from interesting to oppressive methods to instigate nationalism and suppress traditional clan activities. The *diya* or blood compensation was outlawed and replaced by a state controlled death penalty. In efforts to cut rural and urban clan dependence, the government began to provide money for funeral expenses for those who died in towns without relatives. A state sponsored program to urbanize the country and relocate groups of nomads was also initiated. The government set up *digmos*, socialist orientation centers, which were to serve as social and political hubs, and also where weddings now had to be held. The SRC also renamed districts and regions that had clan based names and the traditional greeting of “cousin” *ina adeer* was outlawed and replaced by “friend” *jaalle*, in order to minimize the kinship connotations. Finally, civilian or military personnel took over leadership positions that

¹⁷ Ibid., Lewis, 209.

clan leaders once held and (*guddi*)s were ignored as decision making bodies. The penalties for violating these laws ranged from fines to jail time to death.¹⁸

Especially because of the harsh penalties associated with actively supporting tribalism, many clan based activities were subdued in the 1970s. In the rural areas where the government's reach was minimal, most clans followed the same way of life they had for centuries; however because the urban centers were closer to the administration, many people did begin to undervalue or even sever traditional clan ties. As the 1970s progressed, one of the main goals of the SRC was to continue to stimulate Somali nationalism. One of their most successful programs was that of the creation of a national written Somali language.

The challenges that Somalia faced after independence concerning language were daunting. Somalia had no indigenous written language, and the colonial legacy left Somalis in the south that did not speak or write English and Somalis in the north that did not speak or write Italian. 93% of the country was illiterate, demonstrating the strength and longevity of the Somali oral tradition and also the considerable difficulty that faced the SRC. In 1971, the SRC nationalized education and with a budget of around \$14 million set in motion a plan to create a Latin (Roman) based alphabet and administer a massive literacy campaign. After a year of introduction and intensive teaching in the urban areas, the SRC sent over 30,000 students into the vast countryside to teach the nomadic Somalis. The creation of a national language was not only an enormous stimulus to Somali nationalism, but also greatly increased the cohesion and efficiency of

¹⁸ Ioan M. Lewis, Blood and Bone: The Call of Kinship in Somali Society (Lawrenceville, New Jersey: The Red Sea Press, 1994): 150-156.

the Somali civil service. By the late 1970s, Somalis had succeeded in raising the literacy rate from 7-10% in 1969 to nearly 60%.¹⁹

One of the most emphatic nationalistic impetuses for all Somalis was the pursuit of “Greater Somalia” or the unification of all Somali people, which stems from the idea of ethnic-cultural nationhood embracing all Somalis regardless of where they live. In addition to residing in Somalia, people belonging to the Somali ethnic group also inhabit parts of what is today Ethiopia, Djibouti, and Kenya. In fact the Somali flag which has a five pointed star on it represents the various places that Somalis live. Two points are for the British and Italian Somalilands, now united as one and the other three points represent Somali claims to Djibouti, the Ogaden region in Ethiopia, and the northeast corner of Kenya. All of these regions have large Somali ethnic populations and unifying them has always been a basic goal of Somalis. During the nine years of democracy, Somalia had already entered into a brief conflict with Kenya over land claimed by Somalis, but it had ended without developing into anything more than isolated conflicts.²⁰ One of Barre’s main goals was to unite all Somalis in the region. With military assistance from the Soviet Union, Barre prepared for his conquest, and what would become the turning point in his rule.

The desert region of Ogaden is located in south-eastern Ethiopia. Somali nomads arrived in the region over 500 years ago and have historically utilized Ogaden’s waterholes for their herds. Somalis have always viewed the region as theirs; mostly

¹⁹ Ahmed I. Samatar, Socialist Somalia: Rhetoric & Reality. London: Institute for African Alternatives Zed Books Ltd., 1988: 100-103.

²⁰ Guy Aronald, Wars in the Third World since 1945 (London: Cassell, 1995): 209.

because the population is comprised of mostly Somalis, and also because the region only ended up being given to Ethiopia when Europeans divided up Africa. Adan Abdulle Osman, president of the Somali Republic from 1960 to 1967, stated: “unlike any border problem in Africa, the entire length of the existing boundaries, as imposed by the colonialists, cut across the traditional pastures of our nomadic population. The problem becomes unique when it is realized that no other nation in Africa finds itself totally divided along the whole length of its borders from its own people.”²¹ There have been numerous conflicts between Somalia and Ethiopia concerning rights to the region throughout the past five hundred years but, in the early 1970s, the creation of the Western Somali Liberation Front (WSLF), a Somali separatist organization within the Ogaden, combined with political transitions within Ethiopia provided the spark which would ignite the Ogaden War of 1977-1978.

The 1970s was a time of major political transition in Ethiopia. In 1974 Haile Selassie was deposed by a military junta called the Derg, which in *Ge'ez* means committee or council. The Derg assuming political power had two major influences on Somalia. Firstly the political chaos that ensued during this transition period allowed for both the strengthening and increased opportunities for the WSLF to expand its activities. Secondly, the Derg understood that their radicalization of Ethiopian politics had begun to worry the United States, and in 1976 unveiled a Marxist-Leninist ideology, which was

²¹ Abdisalam Issa-Salwe, Cold War Fallout: Boundary Politics and Conflict in the Horn of Africa (London: HAAN Associates Publishing, 2000): 1.

quickly followed by a 380 million dollar arms deal with the USSR and the end of US aid by early 1977.²²

As aforementioned, Somalia was also an ally of the Soviet Union. In addition to the aid they had been receiving since the mid 1960s, and their transition to scientific socialism in 1970; Barre signed the Treaty of Friendship and Co-operation with the Soviet Union in July 1974. In exchange for protection, and military and economic assistance, the Soviets were able to build military structures and utilize Somalia's land. Barre's confidence in his troops with Soviet military assistance, coupled with his desire to gain the ultimate victory in Somali nationalism and unite Greater Somalia, led him to support the WSLF with resources and, as the conflict progressed into 1978, eventually declared war on Ethiopia.

The WSLF had such striking initial success that, by mid 1977, they had gained control of the entire Ogaden region with the exception of three cities. However, what originally had began as a separatist movement was evolving into a full scale war. Barre and the Somalis, although impassioned by the successes of the WSLF were very worried about the continued presence of the Soviets in Ethiopia. In addition to supporting both countries and refusing to choose sides, the USSR pressed the Somalis to withdraw its support of the WSLF. In September 1977, Barre traveled to Moscow to try and convince the Soviets of the Somali cause, however was unable to do so. One reason could be Somalia had no history of class conflict and the Soviets felt as if Ethiopia provided a better chance for a socialist revolution. Another reading can simply be that Barre was overestimating the importance of Somali to the Soviets. Perhaps if the Soviets and the

²² Samatar, Socialist Somalia; 133.

Somalis enjoyed an equal relationship the situation would have been different, however the Soviets did not need the Somalis and when the Somalis refused to live in peace with Ethiopia, the Soviets did not feel any pressure to stay on the side of the Somalis.

Although Somalis felt betrayed by the Soviets, they were not going to abandon their attempt to re-conquer the Ogaden. In November 1977, the Somalis officially broke off diplomatic ties with the USSR claiming that they had violated the 1974 treaty of Friendship. In addition to severing diplomatic ties, they expelled Soviet personnel and reclaimed military bases used by the Soviets. Somalia immediately began to look for other countries for economic assistance; however, it was unsuccessful. Although the situation would change within a year, the United States had no interest in aiding a country that had just invaded another. Many African countries accused Somalia of violating the Charter of the OAU by supporting the WSLF and refused to assist them. Although, in early 1977, the Saudis had offered Somalia 400 million dollars to expel the Soviets, that offer was no longer on the table when Barre in actuality did expel the Soviets.

The Soviet switch signaled the end for Somalia in the Ogaden War. Over the next 12 months, Moscow airlifted over one billion dollars of military aid to Ethiopia. Additionally, the Soviets provided the Ethiopians with 18,000 Cuban troops. The sheer amount of aid that the Soviets gave to the Ethiopians is surprising and registered as the largest airlift of men or materials anywhere in Africa. It is reported that the initial phases of operations, not including later deliveries by sea, “involved 225 planes, about 12% of the entire Soviet fleet, with 1500 Soviet advisors and 10000 Cubans.”²³ After the

²³ Ibid, Samatar, 134-135.

Ethiopians were re-enforced by the USSR and Cuba, it did not take long to defeat the Somali army and by March 1978 the majority of the fighting was over.

The Ogaden War is extremely important in understanding why clan politics changed in Somalia during the 1980s. Siad Barre had successfully stimulated enough nationalist fervor to attempt to create “Greater Somalia;” however, after his failure in the war, this nationalism quickly receded. The war was a disaster for the Somali military, 1/3 of its soldiers were killed ¾ of its armored units destroyed and it lost ½ of its air force.²⁴ In total, 25,000 Somalis were killed out of a population of only five million. The war also produced over 700,000 refugees, many of whom lost their homes after Ethiopia emptied the disputed region. Somalia had few resources to deal with these refugees, especially after their military loss and the loss of Soviet aid. Considering their lack of resources, the government handled the situation competently and devoted many of the same people and tactics they used for their earlier mass literacy campaign to aid the refugees. The SRC established the National Refugee Commission (NRC) which administered to many ad-hoc refugee camps that were financed mostly by NGOs and sympathetic Western charity organizations. Eventually the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) assumed control and also the one hundred million dollar a year cost to administer the refugee camps.²⁵

After the Ogaden War, Somali citizens became less and less enamored by Barre’s nationalism and scientific socialism and more and more skeptical of his ability to lead the country. Barre however was aware that his policies were failing and now took an avid

²⁴ Aronald, 208-216.

²⁵ Lewis, A Modern History of the Somali, 246-248.

role in maintaining his power by suppressing opposition. In order to appeal to the people after the catastrophic loss, Barre and the SRC created a new constitution in 1979.

Although it claimed to be an extension of Somali rights, in actuality it solidified Barre's control over the power structures in Somalia. Barre now found a new benefactor and forged an alliance with the United States. The bargaining began at two billion dollars for the land rights for US military bases in Somalia; however due to a desperate need for money and poor diplomacy, Somalia agreed on sixty-four million dollars, 2/3 of which would be paid in arms shipments.²⁶ After this agreement was signed in 1980, Somalia was clearly no longer aligned with the Eastern bloc, and thus no longer promoted or administered any progressive programs instituted under scientific socialism. In fact, after 1980 there were no sizable domestic improvement projects undertaken by the government. In essence, Siad Barre and the SRC ceased trying to rebuild their country and instead focused on maintaining power.

After the conclusion of the Ogaden War, Siad Barre entered the second phase of his regime, that of oppression and tribalism. Whereas tribalism had previously been an offense punishable by jail time, Barre now used it to control the people. Barre created clan rivalries by using violence and financial and promotional incentives to keep the various clans competing and distracted. Furthermore, Barre began to actively oppress all clans that were not his own. The three major clans that Barre relied upon were his own Marehan clan, the Ogaden clan of his mother and the Dolbahante clan of his favorite son in law, which earned him the nickname MOD.²⁷ These three clans made up a majority of

²⁶ Samatar, *Socialist Somalia*; 141.

²⁷ Samuel M. Makinda, "Clan Conflict and Factionalism in Somalia" in Warlords in International Relations (New York: St. Martin's Press Inc., 1999): 128.

key governmental positions that ensured Barre's power. His fellow Marehan clan members made up his special forces, the Red Berets (Duub Cas) and his son-in-law was the head of the National Security Service (NSS). Barre's new reliance on clan conflict sparked a revival of opposing clan activity and the recreation of clan based political parties.

In 1978, shortly after the conclusion of the Ogaden War, officers from the Majerteen clan attempted a coup, which was quickly suppressed and the seventeen alleged ringleaders executed. All but one of the officers executed were members of the Majerteen clan. One of the few officers to escape was Lt. Colonel Abdullah Yusuf Ahmed, who formed the Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF), which operated out of Ethiopia, with Ethiopian backing. In response to the SSDF, Barre's Red Berets destroyed water reservoirs to deny water to the clansmen and their herds. In May and June of 1979, 2000 Majerteen died of thirst and the Somali military raped large numbers of women.

Other clans began to create opposition parties as well, both internal and external to Somalia. The Somali National Movement (SNM) was formed by 400 Isaq emigres in 1981 in London, England. The Isaq clan who inhabited the northern area of Somalia (what was British Somaliland) had long felt deprived as a clan and a region. In 1988, they launched an attack in northern Somalia. The Somali military responded with similar tactics as they did in the case of the Majerteen, killing 5000 Isaqs, 1000 being civilian deaths after the fact. 300,000 Isaq refugees were forced to flee to Ethiopia.²⁸

²⁸ Wikipedia the free encyclopedia. "The Somali Revolution (1986-1992)," Wikimedia Foundation, Inc., http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Somali_Revolution_%281986-1992%29.html. (accessed May 12, 2007).

The Hawiye clan also found themselves in conflict with the MOD government. The Hawiye clan was concentrated in the southern portion of Somalia, centralized in the area around Mogadishu. They had also enjoyed administrative and military positions; however in the 1980s they felt marginalized by the huge amount of power the MOD hoarded. Hawiye opposition brought MOD repression and the Hawiye founded the United Somali Congress (USC), which had a branch in Somalia and a branch in Rome, Italy.²⁹ By alienating the Hawiye, Barre also turned his last stronghold into enemy territory.

Another major event that fueled the instigation of clan based warfare occurred when Siad Barre was involved in a major car accident in 1986. Members of his Marehan clan became nervous about other clans gaining power, and they also were finding it difficult to find a successor, even within their own clan, in case Barre died. While Barre was recovering, the Marehan wanted to sign a treaty with Ethiopia to collectively eliminate the SSDF and the SNM. However this initiative angered the Ogaden clan, for they believed that the Marehan and Barre had sold out their homeland by plotting with Ethiopia. These angered Ogadens also happened to be the majority in the Somali army, and so many left the army to form armed militias to try and achieve power themselves; the largest being the Somali Patriotic Movement (SPM).³⁰

One of the main reasons why so many armed groups were able to form and attempt to gain power was due to the mass amount of cold war weapons that had been flowing into Somalia. Between the years of 1980 to 1988, the United States gave Siad Barre 163.5 million dollars in military aid, including 18.1 million to their M113 TOW

²⁹ Samuel M. Makinda, "Clan Conflict and Factionalism in Somalia" in Warlords in International Relations (New York: St. Martin's Press Inc., 1999): 123.

³⁰ Ibid, Makinda, 124-125.

missile program, 8 million towards small arms and 11.6 million to M198 howitzers.³¹

This was in addition to the massive amount of weapons the Soviets had already given the Somalis and the lucrative and unending arms trade across the Ethiopian-Somali border. Barre used these weapons to unleash a campaign of “counter-insurgency” to eliminate rival clans. In a 1990 report by Africa Watch, an affiliate of Human Rights Watch, it is stated that between fifty and sixty thousand Somalis were killed in these campaigns between 1988 and 1990.

By 1989, Barre’s power had subsided so much, that he was known as the “mayor of Mogadishu” because his power barely extended outside of city limits. There were clan based opposition parties stationed throughout the country that had begun to occupy and control various regions of Somalia.³² However the only thing linking the various clan groups opposing Barre was a common hatred of him. No cooperation existed between the numerous opposition clans and there was never a plan for any form of government after the defeat of Barre. Additionally, there was never any real plan of how to reconcile relations with the clans in the MOD and the clans that they oppressed under Barre. Furthermore, a developing generation of Somalis had never participated in democracy, or known anything except for the tribalism and dictatorship of Siad Barre. This figures heavily in conflict resolution in Somalia today, as literally some people have known nothing except for clan based warfare, and can do nothing except continue to co-exist in it.

³¹ Samatar, The Somali Challenge; 164.

³² Makinda, 125.

The Hawiye based United Somali Congress (USC) took power from Barre, as he fled Mogadishu in 1991 and with some of his supporters started the Somali National Front (SNF). The USC could not reconcile leadership differences between their Rome branch and their Somali branch, and thus before a new government could even be considered, the USC split; one faction keeping the name of the USC, and one forming the Somali Salvation Army (SSA). Led by Mohammad Farah Aidid, the Somali branch of the USC eventually gained power in early 1991. However the country was in a state of collapse, and various militias fought for the now vacant position of president of Somalia.³³ Siad Barre lost in his attempt to regain power and died in Lagos, Nigeria in 1995. The fighting continues to this day and no clans have gained any superiority over any of the others or filled the post of president. In the north, the Isaq clan formed enough mass based support from the population that they established the autonomous Somaliland which has basically the same boundaries of the former British Somaliland.

The situation in Somalia today is still one of unresolved civil war. The international community took some initial interest in Somalia's problems, and from 1993 to 1995 there were two UN humanitarian operations. However, neither was a success, and the UN and United States both sustained relatively heavy casualties. Since the UN withdrawal in 1995, clan militias have descended further into lawlessness and many clan militias have transformed into armed gangs led by warlords. Clan concepts such as *reers* have been long forgotten and most of the current militias only have loose clan connections if any at all. In May 2006, heavy fighting broke out again, as various

³³ Jama Mohamed Ghalib, The Cost of Dictatorship: The Somali Experience (New York: Lilian Barber Press Inc., 1995): 193-194.

warlords united under the banner Alliance for the Restoration of Peace and Counter-Terrorism (ARPCT) battled the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) for control of Mogadishu. The ICU emerged as victorious, however the transitional government and the United States, who funded the warlords, refused to acknowledge the ICU because of its perceived ties to Al-Qaeda. Despite claims of terrorist association by the United States, the ICU has been the only group in recent Somali history that has both tried to gain power and provide some type of assistance to the people.³⁴ As of late April, Ethiopian troops had entered Somalia and placed a transitional government in place. Since Ethiopian troops entered Somalia, hundreds more citizens have been killed and there is still no end in sight to the conflict. The presence of Ethiopian soldiers has also enraged many Somalis who now feel as if their country is under occupation, making it even more difficult to form a viable government.

Since the beginning of civil war in 1991, Doctors without Borders reports that over two million Somalis have been killed or displaced. For those who are lucky enough to escape the chaos, one of their first stops were at refugee camps in Eastern Africa, many in neighboring Ethiopia. From there, they were relocated to various points across the globe some of the most frequent destinations being England, other countries in the horn of Africa and the United States. Statistics gathered from The United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR) show that the number of Somali born people coming to the United States jumped from 1737 in 1994 to 3487 in 1995. These numbers continue to increase with a spike in 2002, with 4537 refugees entering the country. Further

³⁴ Ken Menkhaus, Somalia: State Collapse and the Threat of Terrorism (New York: Oxford University Press Inc., 2004).

statistics confirm the influx of Somalis to the United States; as from the years 1995-2000, 1,697 Somalis acquired United States' citizenship while from 2000 to 2004, 9,030 Somalis acquired citizenship.³⁵

Somali Refugees and Clan Affiliation in Columbus Ohio

Although the initial migration of the Somali population to the United States was to Minneapolis, Minnesota, Columbus, Ohio quickly became a common and desired place to settle. Columbus was able to attract newly arrived refugees because it had a growing job market, affordable housing, temperate climate, and now, it has an established Somali community, which is a major draw to Somalis. According to the Economic and Community Development Institute, Columbus is now home to approximately 30,000 Somalis and the Somali community has become an integral part of the culture of the city.

The displacement of Somalis from their country, although unfortunate, has allowed for an interesting trend to emerge. Although clan conflict is seen as the major barrier to securing peace in Somalia, once the refugees leave, clan conflicts no longer seem to be present. One does not hear of Somalis fighting each other in refugee camps, or anywhere else in the Diaspora except in Somalia. This phenomenon cannot be simply explained by their removal from Somalia, as the idea of Somali clans are so ingrained in their society that, regardless of where they traveled to, Somalis would still have a concept of which clan they were in. One example of Somali unity and lack of strife can be seen in their settlement in Columbus.

³⁵ United Nations High Commission on Refugees, "Somalia," n.d., <http://www.unhcr.org> (20 July 2006).

As part of my research, I conducted interviews with two Somalis in Columbus and an African-American assistant principal who works closely with Somali students on a daily basis. I conducted these interviews to become familiar with the Somali experience in Columbus, to gain a larger understanding of the role that clans played in their lives, and to discover why there is no clan conflict in Columbus.

One of the strengths of the Somali community in Columbus is the availability of assistance for refugees. The United Way, Franklin County, the YMCA and a network of local organizations are readily available for refugees to get housing and job assistance, register for English as second language classes (ESL), receive and complete important documentation, and many other services. After learning about various organizations and the services they provide, it is important to state that none of them even inquire about clan allegiances, much less discriminate on the basis of them. However despite the lack of institutional tribalism in the United States, all Somali refugees face many problems when they arrive in America.

According to Abdi Warsame, one of the Somalis who I interviewed, Somalis in Somalia see the United States as a haven; however the refugees from Somalia face a host of issues in Columbus, despite its overall attractiveness as a place to move. Affordable housing is available, however Somali families on average have seven or eight people and most of the available houses in Columbus do not have sufficient space or legally restrict the number of residents allowed to inhabit the property. Many times, as reported by Abdul Giama, families must split themselves up in order to find adequate housing. The once booming job market of 1995 and 1996, when the refugees initially began arriving, has slowed substantially, often making finding employment difficult. American paranoia

regarding Islam is another major challenge that Somalis face. Both interviewees stated “Americans believe all Muslims are terrorists,” a claim which both deny emphatically. However, many employers have not felt the same way, and many Somalis, especially those who worked at the airport found themselves jobless after September 11. Another major change that awaits the refugees is the payment of bills. Both Abdul and Abdi cite the sheer number of financial commitments and bills present in America as a major problem for refugees. Many services that here require compensation, the socialist Somali state provided for free. Especially because of the slow job market, many times Somali refugees are literally overwhelmed with bills they may or may not have the money to pay.³⁶

Although these issues are of great concern to many Somalis, their difficulties serve to highlight their lack of conflict. Both Abdul and Abdi note a lack of clan conflict once refugees arrive in America. There could be many hypotheses to explain this phenomenon. In America, the refugees may be so busy with adjusting socially and economically that they do not have time to fight. Another could be that in Columbus it is not possible for refugees to fight each other; because they do not have access to weapons here, and there are policemen and laws, currently in Somalia there are neither.

A better analysis, however, lies in examining the evolution of Somali clans. Clans in Somalia have been corrupted by Western government, cold war politics and a leader so power hungry that he was willing to pit all his countrymen against each other if allowed him to maintain his power. One of the important steps in the evolution of Somali

³⁶ Abdul Giama and Abdi Warsame, interviewed by Nathaniel Moore, (20 July 2006 and 18 July 2006).

clans occurred when they were forced to participate in Western style government. In Columbus, refugees are not involved in the government, as most of them have not even attained citizenship and the right to vote. Thus there is no vacuum of power that they feel needs to be filled. Secondly, there are no historical Somali clan conflicts here. All refugees get the opportunity to start clan relations anew, and not necessarily get caught up in clan conflicts that they did not instigate. There are many people in militias in Somalia today who are fighting opposing clans and do not know why; some were not born when the initial conflict began in the 1980s. Thirdly, most Columbus residents have little to no knowledge of Somalia, and thus to them, all Somalis truly are the same and are classified not by clan, but as Somalis. As a result, all of them are eligible to receive the same aid and favoritism is minimal if not nonexistent. Thus, people in various clans have no resources to battle over, as they are not awarded goods and services and security based on clan allegiance. Fourth, even in Somalia, those engaged in clan conflict are relatively few; most people who live there are simply civilians being negatively affected by warfare. When they are pushed out of their country, many Somalis reject all the ideologies that forced them to leave; including the idea that one clan cannot cooperate with another. Especially since going back to their country to rebuild is a sentiment that is heavily expressed, most Somalis have no interest in continuing the problems that have impeded nation building in the past.

Although Somalis in Columbus do not relate to the current clan based issues in Somalia, by no means do they lose their clan identity. First, there are still some arenas in which clan rivalry presents itself, mostly in soccer games, and in personal opinions expressed mostly behind closed doors. Another example of Somalis having difficulties in

achieving unity is displayed when there was an election for the President of the Somali Community Organization. 2,697 Somalis cast votes for seventeen candidates; with the results being contested, and many candidates declaring they were being discriminated against.³⁷ Although this does demonstrate disunity within the community, many Somalis in Columbus have never voted in an election, so some of the confusion probably stemmed from that fact as opposed to simply an inability to compromise.

Despite isolated examples of disunity, more traditional clan manifestations can be seen everyday in Columbus. For instance, one of the cornerstones of Somali clans is kinship and a communal existence. The main reason why Somalis have migrated to Columbus is because of family communication and contacts. Abdul speaks of how new Somalis will arrive in Columbus and try to find work before they expatriate the rest of their family. They must stay with friends and/ or relatives, many times having to bounce from family to family in order to have a place to stay. If clan rivalries existed in America, there would be no way that this could occur without constant difficulty. Assistant principal Dennis Dorsey informed me that within Mifflin High School in Columbus, all the Somalis protect each other, regardless of clan affiliation. Furthermore, Dorsey reports that even intra-Somali conflict, regardless of clan, is seen as counter productive and useless. When two Somali students got into a fight at the high school, the clan chief came into the school to help resolve the conflict and specifically promote Somali unity- the boys never fought again.³⁸ This type of mediation by elders in the community is a traditional aspect of Somali conflict resolution, however recently has not

³⁷ "Adjusting to America," interview by Tom Borgerding, New and Young Americans (22 September 2005).

³⁸ Assistant Principal Dennis Dorsey, interviewed by Nathaniel Moore, (1 August 2006).

succeeded in Somalia where there have been countless conferences aimed at achieving peace with no positive results.

The Success of Somaliland

Despite the inability of Southern Somalia to resolve their issues of unity, there is optimistic news for both Somalia and its displaced people flowing from the northern portion of the country. The creation, albeit not “legally,” of Somaliland demonstrates that Somalis are quite capable of governing themselves and serves as a model of political compromise that hopefully will influence the rest of the country. Somaliland occupies the area that used to be called British Somaliland. Whereas the rest of Somalia has continued to spiral into anarchy, Somaliland adopted a constitution in 2001, held local elections in 2002, and fair presidential elections in 2003. Although it still faces major issues of poverty and lacks international representation, Somaliland has managed to achieve what seemed like the impossible; they have united various clans under a republican system.

There are many reasons why Somaliland has had greater success in terms of unity than the rest of the country. Firstly, as I have mentioned earlier, the differences in colonial administration played a large role. The British had few interests in northern Somalia except in “getting cheap meat to feed its Aden garrison and in keeping the French out, England treated its Somali colony with benign neglect.”³⁹ Thus, they allowed the Somalis to maintain many of their native political traditions which are currently

³⁹ Huliaras, Asteris. “The Viability of Somaliland: Internal Constraints and Regional Geopolitics.” Journal of Contemporary African Studies 20:2 (2002): 158.

integral to Somaliland's success. Another reason for the unity of Somaliland is their historic marginalization by the more dominant Southern Somalia. This fostered a general spirit of separatism among the northern population. Finally, the fact that the Isaq clan makes up such a large percentage of the population, around 70%, consolidating power has been somewhat easier. In the past, however, dominant clans have strayed to tribalism and oppression when it comes to sharing power, so in that respect how has Somaliland been able to preserve the peace and allow for all clans to participate equally?

The fact that Somaliland has maintained its traditional political institutions is absolutely fundamental to its success. The "hands off approach" of British colonialism is important, but more so currently significant is Somaliland's lack of international recognition. The lack of international recognition means that it does not qualify for bilateral aid, or support from institutions like the World Bank or The International Monetary Fund (IMF), and also has almost no role in international politics or economics. Although this has restricted Somaliland from initiating many domestic improvement programs and infrastructure construction, it also has guaranteed that they do not have to answer to any international body or fall within any of their Western guidelines. Essentially, for the first time since the 1960s, Somalis are in control of their own destiny.

Another aspect of Somaliland's embrace of traditional governance is the manner in which their parliament is structured. Somaliland's bi-cameral parliament fuses modern and traditional ideas; the Senate consists of traditional elders who are appointed, while the House of Representatives are comprised of elected representatives. Furthermore, Article 9 in the Somaliland constitution states that only three political parties are allowed; they cannot be clan based, and must gain support from four of the six Somaliland

regions.⁴⁰ This idea attempts to reduce the emphasis that clans have on the political process and forces clans to make alliances which facilitates compromise, integration, and pluralism. So far, this idea has been very successful. In the parliamentary elections of 2005, over 90% of Somaliland's residents turned out to vote, indicating a clear desire and ability to co-exist peacefully.⁴¹ Furthermore, the system of governance is having a positive affect on clan relations, as localized efforts, especially those of the elders, are finding success in terms of conflict mediation, restored trust among clans, and increased reliance on traditional laws to solves disputes.

Understanding and advancing the concepts behind Somaliland is absolutely integral to rebuilding Somalia. Despite still being a young country and having no international recognition, Somaliland has peacefully created a government which not only provides for their people, but also downplays clan allegiance and relies on traditional ideas as opposed to Western based ones, which have not found success in the Horn of Africa. The example of Somaliland demonstrates that Somalis are very interested in governing themselves, living in peace, and clearly have the capacity to do so. Although the clan diversity is not as widespread as in the south, by using similar ideas as the north, all of Somalia can reunite and begin to rebuild their country. The use of traditional elders to help and reconcile rival clans and promote unity on a local level, and the use of a mixed traditional and modern parliament on a national level are perhaps

⁴⁰ Ibid, Huliaras, 166.

⁴¹ Simanowitz, Stefan. "Democracy Comes of Age in Somaliland." Contemporary Review December 2005: 335-339.

two of the most important concepts that need to be further analyzed and spread beyond the realm of Somaliland and into the entire nation.

Conclusion

The current situation in Somalia is even more complex and the population more divided than it was in 1991. Even after fifteen years of civil war there is no government, no real humanitarian aid for the people and the one group who appears to be able to unite the country is portrayed as a terrorist organization by the Western media. Somalia is a failure as a modern free state and, regrettably, many of its problems were caused by external factors that grew out of colonial rule. The one recent success of Somalia is its refugees' ability to relocate, start their lives again, and be a positive and integral part of their new communities. Additionally, Somali refugees serve as a universal model for unity and willingness to help other Somalis in need. This is especially true in Columbus Ohio. When comparing the unity of the Columbus refugees to the factionalism in Somalia, one sees almost two separate identities. I contend that the refugees are operating within an authentic Somali cultural identity, however when separated from the chaos historical connotations of Somalia, they manifest their clan identity in a more traditional, communal, and non violent manner. In Somalia, however, clans have been so manipulated and divided for the past sixty years that they can only manifest themselves as armed militias fighting for power.

The traditional concept behind Somali clans is a network of assistance, which is exactly the purpose they serve in Columbus. Conflict is minimal and isolated, and most Somalis go out of their way to help others, regardless of clan. Whether it is through temporary housing assistance, word of mouth communications concerning jobs, or even

Somalis protecting each other in high school, Somali unity is ever-present and genuine. In Somalia, the concept of clan began as a network of assistance to cope with harsh conditions and nomadic traditions, but changed when European powers imposed an alien centralized system of government upon them, with the expectation that they would succeed. During the early years of independence, infant Somali nationalism attempted to overshadow clan politics and for a short while succeeded. However Barre's takeover signaled the turn to scientific socialism which suppressed clan activity, stifled clan growth in this influential period, and declared tribalism as the main impediment to Somali nationalism.

Clan conflict only increased after Siad Barre and Somalia's defeat in the Ogaden War and the resulting administrative shifts concerning clan relations. After cold war politics spelled defeat for Somalia, nationalist fervor and a policy of anti-tribalism was replaced by Barre's use of tribalism to keep his opponents fighting amongst themselves while he maintained power. Furthermore, he used his clan members, the MOD, to violently quell opposition which further splintered the idea of unity. Adding to the difficulties of reconciling the clan conflict was the fact that both Barre and his enemies basically enjoyed endless access to weaponry as cold war politics flooded both Somalia and neighboring Ethiopia with weapons. Although the defeat of Barre in 1991 was probably beneficial to Somalia as a whole, it plunged the country into civil war with clan based militias controlling different regions of the country. The various clans have never negotiated a plan of government for Somalia after Barre. Many of the members of the militias have no experience with democracy, state building or peace, and thus fighting continues to this day.

A common sentiment present in many Somali refugee accounts of their experiences is the desire to return and aid their country. Hopefully, the unity that prevails outside of Somalia can one day be instrumental in reconciling the factions within the country, and the concept of clans can once again exemplify assistance and kinship as opposed to division and violence. Furthermore, the true or traditional purpose of clans must be emphasized and utilized to help rebuild the country, and create a system of governance that is natural to Somalis, as opposed to the imitation of Western style democracies. Finally, clans should not be rejected by Somalis in the future; they are integral and ingrained in their society. Instead Somalis must focus to balance their clan allegiance with a national identity. Any sort of optimism must be contained until peace is reached; however if kinship and assistance can flourish in Somalia the way that it does in the United States, then Somalis have an extremely bright future despite a rather dismal past sixty years.

On the Future of Somalia

Somalia in many respects can be quite depressing. However even in its state of civil war, Somalia still holds the potential to reunite and solve their political and social conflicts. A fatalistic attitude and blaming Siad Barre or the West for Somalia's problems has its time and place; however, at a certain point, it is much more productive to understand why Somalia faces the problems it does and try and solve them, as opposed to wallowing in its failures. In this spirit, I will attempt to mention just a few topics that should be further discussed, analyzed, and perhaps instituted, to make Somalia a peaceful and free country again.

The first key for Somalia is to resolve the civil war and stop the violence. No positive governmental institutions can function in a state of civil war and the people cannot be expected to become involved in deciding their future if they have to worry about their safety on a consistent basis. This is absolutely the first step to Somalia's future success. Secondly, in the past, people have supported international intervention, mainly from the West, to militarily resolve the war and provide humanitarian aid. One of the main reasons that Somalia has been in war so long is because countries who have intervened in the past, specifically the United States and currently Ethiopia, all have their own agendas, and none of them put the Somali people first. One of Somaliland's main successes in creating a government of their own liking is that they receive no international aid and thus are not responsible to anyone except their own people. Obviously Somalia, even if united, will have a major economic difficulty in terms of addressing their widespread poverty. However, relying on other countries for general assistance may just represent a continuous cycle of African exploitation.

Finally, I feel as if one of Somalia's most challenging issues lies in the scope and size of their Diaspora. On one hand, uniting all Somalis throughout the world and who clearly, as exemplified by the population in Columbus, have many things to worry about is a difficult task. However, conversely, the fact that so many are not constricted by the contemporary conditions in Somalia means they have the ability to foster their traditional and positive identities, return to Somalia, and have an immensely positive role. Furthermore, they have the political and economic experiences and resources to help and rebuild their country. They also have the desire to only emphasize traditional clan identities which will be extremely important in terms of reconciling the clan conflict and

identity crisis which is currently manifesting itself there. Although this process may take time as many in the Diaspora must first establish themselves, the Somalis not living in Somalia should, can, and will play an integral role in terms of reuniting Somalia and ending its strife.

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